

1. Why was action not taken earlier?

- A. Military action, including a naval quarantine, before any evidence of offensive weapons was received would have been widely regarded as unjustified. The OAS might not have sanctioned the quarantine, in which case it would have had doubtful legal status and even non-Soviet nations might have tried to ruin it. Our Western allies would have felt that we had unnecessarily brought on any Khrushchev response -- in Berlin or elsewhere -- and refused to stick with us.
- B. Careful surveillance of the island did not disclose any activity related to offensive capabilities prior to last week. Experts on Soviet behavior were unanimous in agreeing that the Soviets would adhere to their policy of not stationing strategic weapons on non-Soviet territory, even under Soviet control. No Eastern Europe satellite, for example, has such weapons on its territory.
- C. Nevertheless the President issued his warnings of September 4 and 13, and secured OAS approval of stepped-up surveillance.
- D. It should be understood that the medium range missiles are a field-type quickly moved in and set up, and the intermediate range missile sites are little more now than excavations -- so that there was little evidence to be seen before last week.

2. Why not take stronger military action now -- such as an air strike or an invasion?

- A. The choice was essentially between all-out military action and a limited military action which can then be stepped up as necessary. The objective is to secure our goal -- the halting of further build-up and the removal of those offensive weapons already there -- with as little cost as possible, i. e., Soviet retaliation.
- B. An air strike now could at best take out only those missiles we have identified, which we know are less than half of the total expected. For this marginal and temporary gain we would be required to kill thousands of Russian nationals -- force Khrushchev to strike our missiles in Turkey and Italy (or seize Berlin by force) -- encourage the local Soviet Commanders of those Cuban missiles which are operational to send retaliatory strikes against this country,

either in point under fire or in the assumption that general war had begun -- and, if we are to minimize the chances of a Cuban response, necessitate such wide-spread bombings (of aircraft, airfields, SAM sites, artillery aimed at Guantanamo, etc.) that an uprising and invasion are almost sure to follow. The U.S. invading Cuba, at a considerable loss of life on both sides, would permanently change our posture in the eyes and annals of the world.

- C. Even more damaging to our position would be a surprise strike a 'Pearl Harbor in reverse' -- and yet no one can devise any form of pressure, warning or ultimatum in advance that Khrushchev could not turn against us or delay for military advantages.
- D. Beginning in a lower key (which many allies will not think is low at all) will help deter any Soviet retaliation and bring our allies along -- then it can be stepped up if necessary.
- E. Most military and Soviet experts agree that the Soviets will not run the quarantine and take on the U.S. Navy in U.S. waters, where our superiority in both weapons and area is clear. This could have an important effect on U.S. credibility and on the old-line Communists in Cuba who feel they are being abandoned.
- F. Khrushchev may be hoping to provoke us in to an all-out attack on Cuba so he can take Berlin -- another Suez-Hungary relationship. To say he would not dare respond implies that he would never respond, that we could liberate Eastern Europe by force, etc.

3. Is this action justified, inasmuch as Soviet missiles are already pointed at the U.S. and U.S. missiles ring the U.S.S.R.?

- A. This move was undertaken secretly, accompanied by false Soviet statements in public and private.
- B. This is a sudden departure from Soviet position that it had no need desire to station strategic weapons off of Soviet territory. Our bases abroad, as our history clearly shows, are there by published agreement to help local peoples and all peoples retain their own government and prevent outside domination. Soviet history is exactly the opposite.
- C. Offensive missiles in Cuba have a very different psychological and political effect on this hemisphere than missiles in the U.S.S.R. -- and had we done nothing, Communism and Castroism could spread throughout the Hemisphere as governments frightened by "nuclear blackmail" toppled.

- D. All this represents a provocative change in the delicate status quo both countries had maintained. If we had accepted this one, he would have tried more. In that sense, this is a probing action preceding Berlin to see whether we retreat or not. In another sense, Khrushchev was desperate enough to change his missile policy and take this step for the very reason that we have for so long frustrated his designs on Berlin.
- E. Our forces and attention with respect to Berlin and other crisis areas have been neither diverted nor diluted to meet the Cuban crisis.
- F. Having given warning that such a move would be unacceptable, we cannot now accept it.

4. Does this invite Khrushchev to justify trading off Berlin for Cuba?

- A. "Islands" not comparable. We have no strategic weapons moving into Berlin -- and have offered to have internationally supervised free plebiscite by people to determine whether they wanted us there.
- B. Gromyko make it clear that they were getting ready to move on Berlin anyway. This does not increase their readiness -- and, by our show of strength, may decrease it.
- C. Our quarantine will not keep out food or medicine and need not endanger war. Communist blockade of Berlin would not be in same category.

Conclusion: Khrushchev's purpose was apparently to force us into a choice between (a) initiating an attack on a small "underdog" country which diverted attention from his Berlin moves or (b) appearing to be an irresolute and unreliable ally. We have chosen neither route.